

CLAIMS

1. Camera apparatus comprising an electronic camera for producing an image signal, a user operable picture taking control for permitting the camera to take pictures, and an additional physically or mechanically operable user control for receiving an input from a user and for generating a saliency signal while the image signal is being produced, operation of at least a part of the camera apparatus being arranged to be controlled in response to the saliency signal.
2. Camera apparatus according to claim 1 wherein said part includes compression circuitry for receiving the said image signals and for compressing them to an extent determined by the saliency signal.
3. Camera apparatus according to claim 1 wherein said part includes a buffer for receiving said image signal, the buffer having a length arranged to be controlled by the saliency signal in operation of the camera apparatus.
4. Camera apparatus according to claim 1 wherein said part includes image selection circuitry for receiving the saliency and image signals and for selectively passing ones of said image signals as determined by said saliency signal.
5. Apparatus according to claim 1 wherein said part comprises a memory with management circuitry for selectively retaining images associated with higher saliency levels in said memory in preference to images with lower saliency levels.
6. Camera apparatus according to claim 5 wherein said memory is arranged for storing the saliency signal together with the image signal.
7. Apparatus according to claim 1 wherein said part comprises a memory including management circuitry for selectively retaining images associated with higher saliency levels in said memory in preference to images with lower saliency levels.
8. Camera apparatus according to claim 7 wherein said memory is arranged for storing the saliency signal together with the image signal.

9. Camera apparatus according to claim 1 further including a memory arranged for storing the saliency signal together with the image signal.
10. Apparatus according to claim 1 further including a user operable for picture taking control of the camera in addition to the user control.
11. Camera apparatus according to claim 1 wherein the user control includes a normal picture taking control on the camera.
12. Camera apparatus according to claim 1 further comprising at least one further physically or mechanically operable user control for generating a corresponding related saliency signal.
13. Camera apparatus according to claim 12 further comprising saliency circuitry for combining said saliency signals to provide a complex saliency signal.
14. Camera apparatus according to claim 1 further comprising saliency circuitry for generating an image related saliency signal in response to the image signal.
15. Camera apparatus according to claim 14 further comprising saliency circuitry for combining said saliency signals to provide a complex saliency signal.
16. Camera apparatus according to claim 1 further including circuitry for incorporating said saliency signal in each of said image signals.
17. Camera apparatus according to claim 1 wherein the user control forms part of the body of the camera or is physically attached thereto.
18. Camera apparatus according to claim 1 wherein the user control is a remote control for communicating with the camera.
19. Camera apparatus according to claim 1 wherein the user control comprises a physically movable control member and a sensor for movement of the control member.
20. Camera apparatus according to claim 1 wherein the user control comprises a pressure or force sensing transducer.

21. Camera apparatus comprising an electronic camera for producing an image signal, a physically or mechanically operable user control for receiving an input from a user and for generating a saliency signal having at least three values or is continuously variable while the image signal is being produced, operation of at least a part of the camera apparatus being arranged to be controlled in response to the saliency signal.
22. Camera apparatus according to claim 21 wherein said part includes compression circuitry for receiving the said image signals and for compressing them to an extent determined by the saliency signal.
23. Camera apparatus according to claim 21 wherein said part includes image selection circuitry for receiving the saliency and image signals and for selectively passing ones of said image signals as determined by said saliency signal.
24. Camera apparatus according to claim 21 wherein said part includes a buffer for receiving said image signal, the buffer length being controlled by the saliency signal in operation of the camera apparatus.
25. Apparatus according to claim 21 wherein said part comprises a memory including management circuitry for selectively retaining images associated with higher saliency levels in said memory in preference to images with lower saliency levels.
26. Camera apparatus according to claim 25 wherein said memory is arranged for storing the saliency signal together with the image signal.
27. Camera apparatus according to claim 21 further including a memory arranged for storing the saliency signal together with the image signal.
28. Apparatus according to claim 21 further including a user operable for picture taking control of the camera in addition to the user control.
29. Camera apparatus according to claim 21 wherein the user control includes a normal picture taking control on the camera.

30. Camera apparatus according to claim 21 further comprising at least one further physically or mechanically operable user control for generating a corresponding related saliency signal.
31. Camera apparatus according to claim 30 further comprising saliency circuitry for combining said saliency signals to provide a complex saliency signal.
32. Camera apparatus according to claim 21 further comprising saliency circuitry for generating an image related saliency signal in response to the image signal.
33. Camera apparatus according to claim 32 further comprising saliency circuitry for combining said saliency signals to provide a complex saliency signal.
34. Camera apparatus according to claim 21 further including circuitry for incorporating said saliency signal in each of said image signals.
35. Camera apparatus according to claim 21 wherein the user control forms part of the body of the camera or is physically attached thereto.
36. Camera apparatus according to claim 21 wherein the user control is a remote control for communicating with the camera.
37. Camera apparatus according to claim 21 wherein the user control comprises a physically movable control member and a sensor for movement of the control member.
38. Camera apparatus according to claim 21 wherein the user control comprises a pressure or force sensing transducer.
39. Camera apparatus according to claim 1 wherein the saliency signal is binary.
40. An imaging system comprising an electronic camera for producing an image signal, at least two physically or mechanically operable user controls each for receiving an input from a user and for generating first and second saliency signals while the image signal is being produced, and saliency circuitry for combining said first and second saliency signals to provide a complex saliency signal.

41. An imaging system according to claim 40, wherein operation of at least part of the camera apparatus is arranged to be controlled in response to the complex saliency signal.
42. An imaging system according to claim 40, further comprising a separate user operable picture taking control for permitting the camera to take pictures.
43. An imaging system according to claim 40, wherein the first of said saliency signals has more than two values.
44. An imaging system comprising an electronic camera for producing an image signal, a physically or mechanically operable user control for receiving an input from a user and for generating a first saliency signal while the image signal is being produced, saliency circuitry for generating an image related second saliency signal in response to the image signal, and circuitry for combining said saliency signals to provide a complex saliency signal.
45. An imaging system according to claim 44, wherein operation of at least a part of the camera apparatus is arranged to be controlled in response to the complex saliency signal.
46. An imaging system according to claim 44, further comprising a separate user operable picture taking control for permitting the camera to take pictures.
47. An imaging system according to claim 44 wherein the first of said saliency signals has more than two values.
48. An apparatus comprising an electronic camera having a picture taking control for enabling the camera to supply picture signals, the camera further including a user operable control for generating a saliency signal; and a compression circuit for compressing the picture signals to an extent determined by the saliency signal.
49. The apparatus according to claim 48 wherein the saliency signal has more than two values.
50. The apparatus of claim 48 wherein the camera includes the circuit.

51. An apparatus comprising an electronic camera having a picture taking control for enabling the camera to supply picture signals, the camera further including a user operable control for generating a saliency signal; and a buffer for receiving the picture signals and having a length in response to the saliency signal.
52. The apparatus according to claim 51 wherein the saliency signal has more than two values.
53. The apparatus of claim 51 wherein the camera includes the buffer.
54. An apparatus comprising an electronic camera having a picture taking control for enabling the camera to supply picture signals, the camera further including a user operable control for generating a saliency signal; and a picture selection circuit for selectively passing the picture signals in response to the saliency signal.
55. The apparatus according to claim 54 wherein the saliency signal has more than two values.
56. The apparatus of claim 54 wherein the camera includes the circuit.
57. An apparatus comprising an electronic camera having a picture taking control for enabling the camera to supply picture signals, the camera further including a user operable control for generating a saliency signal; and a memory arranged for selectively retaining images associated with higher saliency levels in said memory in preference to images with lower saliency levels.
58. The apparatus according to claim 57 wherein the saliency signal has more than two values.
59. The apparatus of claim 57 wherein the camera includes the memory.